

Building and Business Safety

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Building and Business Safety

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Building and Business Safety

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Be Informed

- Know what kinds of emergencies might affect your company both internally and externally. Find out which natural disasters are most common in the areas where you operate. You may be aware of some of your community's risks; others may surprise you.
- Learn about what to do during a biological, chemical, explosive, nuclear or radiological attack.

Continuity of Operations Planning

How quickly your company can get back to business after a terrorist attack or tornado, fire or flood often depends on emergency planning done today. Start planning now to improve the likelihood that your company will survive and recover.

Carefully assess how your company functions, both internally and externally, to determine which staff, materials, procedures and equipment are absolutely necessary to keep the business operating.

- Review your business process flow chart if one exists.
 - Identify operations critical to survival and recovery.
 - Include emergency payroll, expedited financial decision-making and accounting systems to track and document costs in the event of a disaster.
 - Establish procedures for succession of management. Include at least one person who is not at the company headquarters, if applicable.
1. Identify your suppliers, shippers, resources and other businesses you must interact with on a daily basis.
 - Develop professional relationships with more than one company to use in case your primary contractor cannot service your needs. A disaster that shuts down a key supplier can be devastating to your business.
 - Create a contact list for existing critical business contractors and others you plan to use in an emergency. Keep this list with other important documents on file, in your emergency supply kit and at an off-site location.

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2. Plan what you will do if your building, plant or store is not accessible. This type of planning is often referred to as a continuity of operations plan, or COOP, and includes all facets of your business.
 - Consider if you can run the business from a different location or from your home.
 - Develop relationships with other companies to use their facilities in case a disaster makes your location unusable.
3. Plan for payroll continuity.
4. Decide who should participate in putting together your emergency plan.
 - Include co-workers from all levels in planning and as active members of the emergency management team.
 - Consider a broad cross-section of people from throughout your organization, but focus on those with expertise vital to daily business functions. These will likely include people with technical skills as well as managers and executives.
5. Define crisis management procedures and individual responsibilities in advance.
 - Make sure those involved know what they are supposed to do.
 - Train others in case you need back-up help.
6. Coordinate with others.
 - Meet with other businesses in your building or industrial complex.
 - Talk with first responders, emergency managers, community organizations and utility providers.
 - Plan with your suppliers, shippers and others you regularly do business with.
 - Share your plans and encourage other businesses to set in motion their own continuity planning and offer to help others.

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7. Review your emergency plans annually. Just as your business changes over time, so do your preparedness needs. When you hire new employees or when there are changes in how your company functions, you should update your plans and inform your people.

Emergency Planning for Employees

Your employees and co-workers are your business's most important and valuable asset. There are some procedures you can put in place before a disaster, but you should also learn about what people need to recover after a disaster. It is possible that your staff will need time to ensure the well-being of their family members, but getting back to work is important to the personal recovery of people who have experienced disasters. It is important to re-establish routines, when possible.

Two-way communication is central before, during and after a disaster.

- Include emergency preparedness information in newsletters, on company intranet, periodic employee emails and other internal communications tools.
- Consider setting up a telephone calling tree, a password-protected page on the company website, an email alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees in an emergency.
- Designate an out-of-town phone number where employees can leave an "I'm Okay" message in a catastrophic disaster.
- Provide all co-workers with wallet cards detailing instructions on how to get company information in an emergency situation. Include telephone numbers or Internet passwords for easy reference.
- Maintain open communications where co-workers are free to bring questions and concerns to company leadership.
- Ensure you have established staff members who are responsible for communicating regularly to employees.

Talk to co-workers with disabilities. If you have employees with disabilities ask about what assistance is needed. People with disabilities typically know what assistance they will need in an emergency.

- Identify co-workers in your organization with special needs.

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- Engage people with disabilities in emergency planning.
- Ask about communications difficulties, physical limitations, equipment instructions and medication procedures.
- Identify people willing to help co-workers with disabilities and be sure they are able to handle the job. This is particularly important if someone needs to be lifted or carried.
- Plan how you will alert people who cannot hear an alarm or instructions.
- Frequently review and practice what you intend to do during and after an emergency with drills and exercises.

Emergency Supplies

When preparing for emergency situations, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. Encourage everyone to have a Portable Kit customized to meet personal needs, such as essential medications.

NOAA weather radio:

- With tone-alert feature, if possible, that automatically alerts you when a watch or warning is issued in your area. Tone-alert is not available in some areas.
- Include extra batteries.
- It is recommended that you have both a battery-powered commercial radio and a NOAA weather radio with an alert function. The NOAA weather radio can alert you to weather emergencies or announcements from the Department of Homeland Security. The commercial radio is a good source for news and information from local authorities.

Keep copies of important records such as site maps, building plans, insurance policies, employee contact and identification information, bank account records, supplier and shipping contact lists, computer backups, emergency or law enforcement contact information and other priority documents in a waterproof, fireproof portable container. Store a second set of records at an off-site location.

Talk to your co-workers about what emergency supplies the company can feasibly provide, if any, and which ones individuals should consider keeping on hand.

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Recommended emergency supplies include the following:

- Water, amounts for portable kits will vary. Individuals should determine what amount they are able to both store comfortably and to transport to other locations. If it is feasible, store one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- [Dust or filter masks](#), readily available in hardware stores, which are rated based on how small a particle they filter
- Moist towelettes for sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to "[seal the room](#)"
- Garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation

Deciding to Stay or Go

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision after an incident occurs is whether to shelter-in-place or evacuate. Understand and plan for both possibilities in advance by developing clear, well thought out plans.

- Have an [Evacuation Plan](#) and a [Shelter-in-Place Plan](#).
- In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should monitor TV or radio news reports for information or official instructions as they become available.
- If you are specifically told to evacuate, shelter-in-place or seek medical treatment, do so immediately.
- Use common sense and available information to determine if there is immediate danger. For example, if your building is damaged you will typically want to evacuate.

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Fire Safety

Fire is the most common of all business disasters. Each year fires cause thousands of deaths and injuries and billions of dollars in damage.

- Have your office, plant or facility inspected for fire safety; ensure compliance with fire codes and regulations.
- Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in appropriate locations.
- Consider an automatic sprinkler system, fire hoses and fire-resistant doors and walls.
- Establish a system for warning your employees. Plan how you will communicate with people with hearing impairments or other disabilities and those who do not speak English.
- Put a process in place for alerting the fire department.
- Plan and practice how people will evacuate in a fire.

Medical Emergencies

Workplace medical emergencies vary greatly depending on the disaster, type of job and the worksite. Heavy equipment operators face different safety risks than do office workers or food service personnel. Regardless of the type of work, there are steps which can give you the upper hand in responding to a medical emergency.

- Encourage employees to take basic first aid and CPR training. Offer on-site classes for your co-workers.
- Keep first aid supplies in stock and easily accessible.
- Encourage employees to talk about medical conditions that may require support or special care in an emergency.
- Keep employee emergency contact information on file and up-to-date. Store a copy with other vital records in your emergency kit and another at an off-site location.

Influenza Pandemic

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population and the virus begins to cause

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serious illness and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. The federal government, states, communities and industry are taking steps to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic.

If a pandemic occurs, it is likely to be a prolonged and widespread outbreak that could require temporary changes in many areas of society, such as schools, work, transportation and other public services. An informed and prepared public can take appropriate actions to decrease their risk during a pandemic. To be prepared for such an emergency, the U.S Department of Health and Human Services encourages individuals, businesses and communities to:

- Talk with your local public health officials and health care providers, who can supply information about the signs and symptoms of a specific disease outbreak and recommend prevention and control actions.
- Adopt business/school practices that encourage sick employees/students to stay home and anticipate how to function with a significant portion of the workforce/school population absent due to illness or caring for ill family members.
- Practice good health habits, including eating a balanced diet, exercising daily and getting sufficient rest. In addition, take common-sense steps to stop the spread of germs including frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying away from others as much as possible when you are sick.
- Stay informed about pandemic influenza and be prepared to respond. Consult www.pandemicflu.gov frequently for updates on national and international information on pandemic influenza.

Involve Co-workers

One of the best methods of assuring your company's recovery is to provide for your co-workers' well-being. Communicate regularly with employees before, during and after an incident.

- Involve co-workers from all levels in emergency planning.
- Use newsletters, Intranets, staff meetings and other internal communications tools to communicate emergency plans and procedures.
- Set up procedures to warn employees. Plan how you will communicate with people who are hearing-impaired or have other disabilities or who do not speak English.

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- Consider setting up a telephone call tree, password-protected page on the company website, email alert or call-in voice recording to communicate with employees in an emergency.
- Designate an out-of-town phone number where employees can leave an "I'm Okay" message in a catastrophic disaster. Remember to minimize your calls and keep them short so others can get through.
- Encourage employees to have alternate means and routes for getting to and from work, in case their normal mode of transportation is interrupted.
- Keep a record of employee emergency contact information with other important documents in your emergency kit and at an off-site location.
- If you rent, lease or share space with other businesses, it is important to communicate, share and coordinate evacuation procedures and other emergency plans.

Practice the Plan

Go beyond planning and frequently practice what you intend to do during a disaster. Just as your business changes day-to-day, so should your plan. Drills and exercises will help you prepare.

- If you rent, lease or share office space, coordinate and practice evacuation and other emergency plans with other businesses in your building or facility.
- Conduct regularly scheduled education and training seminars to provide co-workers with information, identify needs and develop preparedness skills.
- Include preparedness training in new employee orientation programs.
- Do tabletop exercises with members of the emergency management team. Meet in a conference room setting to discuss individual responsibilities and how each would react to emergency scenarios.
- Schedule walk-through drills where the emergency management team and response teams actually perform their designated emergency functions. This activity generally involves more people and is more thorough than a tabletop exercise.
- Practice evacuating and sheltering. Have all personnel walk the evacuation route to a designated area where procedures for accounting for all personnel are tested. Practice your "shelter-in-place" plan.
- Evaluate and revise processes and procedures based on lessons learned in training and exercise.

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- Keep training records.

Promote Preparedness

Re-establishing routines, including getting back to work, is important to the well-being of people who have experienced disasters. If individuals and families are prepared, your company and your co-workers are better positioned in an emergency situation.

- Encourage your employees and their families to: Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed.
- Include emergency preparedness information in newsletters, on company Intranet, periodic employee emails and other internal communications tools.
- Consider how workers will communicate with family members in case they are separated from one another or injured.

Crisis Communication Plan

Detail how your organization plans to communicate with employees, local authorities, customers and others during and after a disaster.

- Employees: Be prepared to provide employees with information on when, if and how to report to work following an emergency.
 - Set up a telephone call tree, password-protected page on the company website, an email alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees in an emergency.
 - Be clear on how their jobs may be affected.
- Management: Provide top company executives with all relevant information needed for the protection of employees, customers, vendors and nearby facilities.
- Public: It may be important to update the general public with calm assurance that all resources are being used to protect workers and the community. Being able to communicate that plans are in place for recovery may be especially important.
- Customers: Update your customers on whether and when products will be received and services rendered.

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- Government: Tell officials what your company is prepared to do to help in the recovery effort. Also communicate with local, state and federal authorities what emergency assistance is needed for you to continue essential business activity.
- Other businesses/immediate neighbors: You should be prepared to give competing and neighboring companies a prompt briefing on the nature of the emergency so they may be able to assess their own threat levels.

Employee Health

People who have experienced a disaster may have special recovery needs.

- Encourage adequate food, rest and recreation.
- Provide for time at home to care for family needs, if necessary.
- Have an open door policy that facilitates seeking care when needed.
- Create opportunities for breaks where co-workers can talk openly about their fears and hopes. Sharing with others can speed personal recovery.
- Reassure one another that families will be supported. Worries about family well-being can consume workers who have experienced a disaster.
- Re-establish routines, when possible. Workplace routines facilitate recovery by providing an opportunity to be active and to restore social contact.
- Offer professional counselors to help co-workers address their fears and anxieties.
- Once the need to listen for emergency instructions has passed, limit television, radio and other external stresses.
- Take care of yourself. Leaders tend to experience added stress after a disaster. Your personal health and recovery is important to your family and your employees.

Review Insurance Coverage

Inadequate insurance coverage can lead to major financial loss if your business is damaged, destroyed or simply interrupted for a period of time. Insurance policies vary, check with your agent or provider.

- Meet with your insurance provider to review current coverage for such things as physical losses, flood coverage and business interruption.

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- Understand what it covers and what it does not.
- Understand what your deductible is, if applicable.
- Consider how you will pay creditors and employees.
- Plan how you will provide for your own income if your business is interrupted.
- Find out what records your insurance provider will want to see after an emergency and store them in a safe place.

Utility Disruptions

Businesses are often dependent on electricity, gas, telecommunications, sewer and other utilities.

- Plan ahead for extended disruptions during and after a disaster. Carefully examine which utilities are vital to your business's day-to-day operation. Speak with service providers about potential alternatives and identify back-up options.
- Learn how and when to turn off utilities. If you turn the gas off, a professional must turn it back on. Do not attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.
- Consider purchasing portable generators to power the vital aspects of your business in an emergency. Never use a generator inside as it may produce deadly carbon monoxide gas. It is a good idea to pre-wire the generator to the most important equipment. Periodically test the backup system's operability.
- Decide how you will communicate with employees, customers, suppliers and others. Use cell phones, walkie-talkies or other devices that do not rely on electricity as a back-up to your telecommunications system.
- Plan a secondary means of accessing the Internet if it is vital to your company's day-to-day operations.
- If food storage or refrigeration is an issue for your business, identify a vendor in advance that sells ice and dry ice in case you can't use refrigeration equipment.

Secure Facilities

While there is no way to predict what will happen or what your business's circumstances will be, there are things you can do in advance to help protect your physical assets.

- Install fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in appropriate places.

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- Locate and make available building and site maps with critical utility and emergency routes clearly marked.
- Plan to provide a copy to firefighters or other first responders in the event of a disaster.
- Keep copies of these documents with your emergency plan and other important documents in your [Emergency Supply Kit](#).
- Consider if you could benefit from automatic fire sprinklers, alarm systems, closed circuit TV, access control, security guards or other security systems.
- Secure ingress and egress. Consider all the ways in which people, products, supplies and other things get into and leave your building or facility.
- Plan for mail safety. The nation's battle against terrorism takes place on many fronts, including the mailrooms of U.S. companies. A properly informed and well-trained workforce can overcome such threats.
 - Teach employees to be able to quickly identify suspect packages and letters. Warning signs include:
 - Misspelled words
 - No return address
 - Excessive use of tape
 - Strange discoloration or odor

The [United States Postal Service](#) suggests that if a suspect letter or package is identified:

- Don't open, smell, touch or taste.
- Immediately isolate suspect packages and letters.
- Move out of the area and don't let others in.
- Quickly wash with soap and water and remove contaminated clothing.
- Contact local law enforcement authorities.
- Post emergency numbers for easy reference.
- Identify what production machinery; computers, custom parts or other essential equipment is needed to keep the business open.
- Plan how to replace or repair vital equipment if it is damaged or destroyed.

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- Identify more than one supplier who can replace or repair your equipment.
- Store extra supplies, materials and equipment for use in an emergency.
- Plan what you will do if your building, plant or store is not usable.
- Consider if you can run the business from a different location or from your home.
- Develop relationships with other companies to use their facilities in case a disaster makes your location unusable.
- Identify and comply with all local, state and federal codes and other safety regulations that apply to your business.
- Talk to your insurance provider about what impact any of these steps may have on your policy.

Secure Equipment

The force of some disasters can damage or destroy important equipment.

- Conduct a room-by-room walk-through to determine what needs to be secured.
- Attach equipment and cabinets to walls or other stable equipment.
- Place heavy or breakable objects on low shelves.
- Move workstations away from large windows, if possible.
- Elevate equipment off the floor to avoid electrical hazards in the event of flooding.

Building Air Protection

In some emergencies microscopic particles may be released into the air. For example, earthquakes often can release dust and debris into the air. A biological attack may release germs that can make you sick. And a dirty bomb can spread radioactive particles. Many of these things can only hurt you if they get into your body. A building can provide a barrier between contaminated air outside and people inside, but there are ways to improve building air protection.

Depending on the size of the building and the design and layout of the Heating, Ventilating and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) system, there may be simple steps building owners and managers can take to help protect people from some airborne threats. If you rent or lease your space, speak to the building's

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owners and managers; regarding HVAC maintenance. Ask if there are options for improving building air protection.

- DHS has a designated HVAC protection system, Please go to <http://www.safetyact.gov> to find the Building Sentry One line of toxin protection systems that are commercially installed and available to protect occupants of a building from the catastrophic results of chemical, radiological or biological agent in air contamination incidents and during emergencies.
- Know your HVAC system.
 - Building owners or managers and employers should take a close look at the site's system and be sure it is working properly and is well maintained.
 - Be sure any security measures do not adversely impact air quality or fire safety.
- Develop and practice shut-down procedures for the HVAC system.
- Secure outdoor air intakes. HVAC systems can be an entry point and means of distributing biological, chemical and radiological threats.
 - Limit access to air intake locations to protect the people inside a building from airborne threats. Air intakes at or below ground level are most vulnerable because anyone can gain easy access.
 - Consider relocating or extending an exposed air intake, but do not permanently seal it.

Determine if you can feasibly upgrade the building's filtration system.

- Increasing filter efficiency is one of the few things that can be done in advance to consistently protect people inside a building from biological and some other airborne threats.
 - Carefully consider the highest filtration efficiency that will work with a building's HVAC system.
- High Efficiency Particulate Arrester (HEPA) filter fans. These individual units have highly efficient filters that can capture very tiny particles, including many biological agents. Once trapped within a HEPA filter, contaminants cannot get into your body and make you sick.

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While these filters are excellent at filtering dander, dust, molds, smoke, many biological agents and other contaminants, they will not stop chemical gases.

Cyber Security

Protecting your data and information technology systems may require specialized expertise. Depending on the particular industry and the size and scope of the business, cyber security can be very complicated. However, even the smallest business can be better prepared.

Every computer can be vulnerable to attack. The consequences of such an attack can range from simple inconvenience to financial catastrophe. While a thief can only steal one car at a time, a single hacker can cause damage to a large number of computer networks and can wreak havoc on both your business and the nation's critical infrastructure.

- Use anti-virus software and keep it up-to-date.
- Activate the software's auto-update feature to ensure your cyber security is always up-to-date. Think of it as a regular flu shot for your computer to stop viruses in their tracks!
- Don't open email from unknown sources.
- Be suspicious of unexpected emails that include attachments whether they are from a known source or not.
- When in doubt, delete the file and the attachment, and then empty your computer's deleted items file.
- Use hard-to-guess passwords.
- Passwords should have at least eight characters with a mixture of uppercase and lowercase letters as well as numbers.
- Change passwords frequently.
- Do not give your password to anyone.
- Protect your computer from Internet intruders by using firewalls.
- There are two forms of firewalls: software firewalls that run on your personal computer and hardware firewalls that protect computer networks or groups of computers.
- Firewalls keep out unwanted or dangerous traffic while allowing acceptable data to reach your computer.

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- Don't share access to your computers with strangers.
- Check your computer operating system to see if it allows others to access your harddrive. Hard-drive access can open up your computer to infection.
- Unless you really need the ability to share files, your best bet is to do away with it.
- "Https" or "http" at the beginning of a Web address (URL) are each an indication that a website has taken extra security steps to protect your information. Look for either one when conducting online transactions.
- Be careful which sites or services you access when using public wireless networks. Even if they are secure (require a password to get on), you never know who else is using the network.
- Back up your computer data. Many computer users have either already experienced the pain of losing valuable computer data or will at some point in the future. Back up your data regularly and consider keeping one version offsite.
- Regularly download security protection updates known as patches. Patches are released by most major software companies to cover up security holes that may develop in their programs.
- Regularly download and install the patches yourself, or check for automated patching features that do the work for you.
- Check your security on a regular basis.
- When you change your clocks for Daylight Saving Time, evaluate your computer security. The programs and operating system on your computer have security settings that you can adjust.
- Do you have multiple door locks and a high-tech security system at your office? It could be that tighter security for your computer system is also what you need.
- Pack it up and take your laptop with you, even if you intend to be right back. Unattended laptops in public places like libraries, study lounges, break rooms and coffee shops are an invitation for theft or unwanted access to your information.
- Employ the same online safety behaviors when "surfing" on a mobile device. Make sure your co-workers know what to do if your computer system becomes infected.
- Train employees on how to update virus protection software, how to download security patches from software vendors and how to create a proper password.
- Include or update cyber security practices in employee handbooks and pay special attention to policies regarding the use of mobile devices and laptops when used offsite.

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- Designate a person to contact for more information if there is a problem.
- Subscribe to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [National Cyber Alert System](#) to receive free, timely alerts on new threats and learn how to better protect your area of cyberspace.
- US-CERT is a partnership between DHS and public and private sectors. It was established to protect the nation's Internet infrastructure through coordinated defense against and responses to cyber attacks.
- Participate in National Cyber Security Awareness Month.

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- Become familiar with the emergency procedures for your local transit system.
- Learn and practice alternate routes to where you may need to go.
- Take special note of the emergency exits at the stations you use.
- Carry a flashlight, dust mask and protective gloves with you.
- Keep a local map with you in case you need to walk or find alternate transportation.
- Update your family disaster plan to include your regular commuting routes.
- Locate the nearest payphone and carry coins as some cellular telephones may not work in underground transportation.